



Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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DOVE Center Invites Southern Utah to Be Part of the Change by Attending Sexual Assault Awareness Month Events

ST. GEORGE — April is recognized as Sexual Assault Awareness Month. In an effort to recognize the prevalence of sexual violence in Southern Utah and dispel victim-blaming myths, DOVE Center — a nonprofit committed to providing support and services to survivors of domestic abuse and sexual violence — is encouraging the community to participate in a variety of events.

DOVE's annual "[What Were You Wearing?](#)" Exhibit, which features stories and outfits from local survivors to dispel the myth that clothing invites sexual assault will be on display April 3-7, in the Holland Centennial Commons Building at Utah Tech University. The exhibit will also be displayed in the Eccles Fine Arts Center April 10-14.

The exhibit will have an opening reception April 3, with presentations from the Booth Wellness Center and Southwest Forensic Healthcare. The exhibit is free and open to the public.

Advocates from DOVE also encourage community members to sign the pledge to [start by believing](#) survivors who disclose sexual assault and get their picture taken with Utah Tech police officers. The event takes place April 5 at 11 a.m. in the Holland Building.

"DOVE Center has seen a steady increase in sexual assaults each year," said Elizabeth Bluhm, Education Program Manager for DOVE. According to the [Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network](#), a sexual assault occurs every 68 seconds in the United States. In Utah, rape is the only violent crime that is higher than the national average.

DOVE served 124 survivors who disclosed any form of sexual assault, including human trafficking, in 2022 — a 5% increase compared to the previous year. DOVE's [Hospital Advocacy](#)

[Response Team](#) responded to 50 call outs to the hospital to provide emotional support to victims of sexual assault in 2022.

Additional events include a presentation on safety tips and on-campus self defense on April 13, International Denim Day on April 26, and the annual [Heels to Heal Walk](#) hosted by [Pacific Island Knowledge to Action Resources](#) on April 29.

Other steps people in Southern Utah can take to enact change include educating themselves about sexual violence, learning what resources are available, and creating a safe space where survivors feel heard and believed. Participating in these events is a great step in that direction, according to Bailey VanOver, Rape/Sexual Assault Program Coordinator for DOVE.

“Society needs to overcome the myth that survivors are lying,” she said. “The individual who commits the assault needs to be held accountable, not the victim. Southern Utah still has a way to go in believing survivors of sexual assault.”

“Unfortunately, victim blaming remains one of the most common reactions when hearing about a sexual assault,” Van Over added, “a reaction that desperately needs to change.”

Ultimately, the purpose of these community events is to increase the knowledge of potential jury members in Southern Utah, Bluhm said, so when these difficult cases make it all the way to court, jury members will have the education to recognize myths and hold perpetrators responsible.

“When the community comes together, they are showing solidarity for the desire for change, support and education,” she said.

For more details and times on all events, click [here](#). All events are free and open to the public. To learn more about DOVE’s sexual violence services or speak with an advocate, call DOVE’s 24-Hour Helpline at 435-628-0458 or visit www.dovecenter.org.

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About DOVE Center

DOVE Center is a registered 501(c)(3) non-profit organization that is dedicated to providing shelter, advocacy and counseling to survivors of domestic abuse, dating violence, sexual assault, rape, sex trafficking and stalking in Washington and Kane counties.

To learn more, please visit dovecenter.org, or connect with us on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#) and [YouTube](#).